

25th Sunday After Pentecost (Series B)

November 15, 2015

Gospel: Mark 13:1-13

Epistle: Heb 10:11-25

Lesson: Dan 12:1-3

Psalm: Psalm 16

CLB Commentary: Professor Brad Pribbenow

The context for this pericope is Holy Week. Following the triumphal entry in Mark 11:1-11, Jesus makes a number of “day trips” into Jerusalem. In Mark 11:27 Jesus returns to the city and, in particular, to the temple. Everything that takes place between Mark 11:27 and Mark 13:1—Jesus’ interactions with Jewish leaders who were seeking to trap him in his own words (Mk 12:13)—took place in the middle of Holy Week and in the temple area. Now, in Mk 13:1, as Jesus is leaving the temple, his disciples catch a glimpse of the striking beauty of the temple and it prompts them to make a simple observation: “what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings” (NASB). Not being one to let a teachable moment pass, Jesus responds.

Jesus’s description of “the end” (vs. 7) includes the destruction of the temple, an event which was believed to usher in the end times. Significantly, his description also places himself at the center of the action. “Many will come in *my name* saying, ‘*I am he!*’” In the Greek, the pronoun “he” is not present, leaving us with just “I Am”—a clear allusion to God’s giving of his name to Moses in Ex 3:14. It is also understood as a Messianic claim.

One can’t help but recognize in the descriptions of the “beginning of birth pangs” described in these verses a stark reflection of our world today: false prophets and false christs misleading people; wars and fighting throughout the globe; new earthquakes nearly every month; famine present in an alarming number of countries; Christians being persecuted; and families being divided because of faith in Jesus Christ (or lack thereof).

So what else can we say when reflecting on this but *we are in the last days!* The end is drawing near! These things are certain and need to be brought to light. But to focus your sermon on this fact alone is to miss its more fundamental message.

What must not be lost in this text is the Gospel. Jesus said that the end will come; we see clearly, in many ways, that the end is upon us. There is no stopping its progression. We cannot create a

“heaven on earth” nor raise up a new moral generation to cull the approach of Christ’s return. What we are called to do in the face of the increasing destruction and depravity of our time is to point people to Christ, *preaching the Good News* of his atoning death and resurrection!

If the Lord returns, we need the Gospel. If the Lord tarries, we still need the Gospel, for one day or another our life on this earth will end. For that day—and every day between now and then—we need the Gospel.

Talk of “end times” can instill fear of what will happen. We may wonder if we, or our loved ones, will be ready. The best way to be ready *then* is to be ready *now*. And the way in which we are made ready—and are able to endure to the end (vs. 13)—is to be made alive today and every day through Jesus Christ.

May God help us, his church, be aware of the times. May we be found trusting in him for salvation and for all matters. May we be preserved through trial, given grace and strength to endure to the end. And, may we live each day in the Gospel, as we take opportunities each day to proclaim that Gospel to others.